

AD-A009 947

THEY'D JOLLY WELL BETTER DO IT: HAS CANADIAN
ARMED FORCES UNIFICATION WORKED

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19 January 1975

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER AD-A009947
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) They'd Jolly Well Better Do It: Has Canadian Armed Forces Unification Worked?		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Student Essay
7. AUTHOR(s) LTC George V. Boucher		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS US Army War College Carlisle Barracks, Pa. 17013		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		12. REPORT DATE 19 Jan 75
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 17 28
		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Reproduced by NATIONAL TECHNICAL INFORMATION SERVICE US Department of Commerce Springfield, VA. 22151		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) An exploration is made of the results to date of the merger between 1964 and 1968 of three armed services into one Canadian Armed Forces and the lessons that experience suggests for the United States. Data was gathered using a literature search. Unification was aided by Canadian history, the political climate of the mid-1960's, a peculiar defense posture, and unique cultural demands. The reorganization sought to cut costs, improve control mechanisms, and overcome duplication. Although it has not lived up to fiscal expectations,		

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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

Item 20 continued.

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USAWC RESEARCH ELEMENT

(Essay)

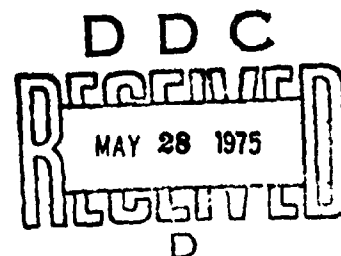
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FORMAT: Essay
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PAGES: 17

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"Why, I would undertake the command of a fleet without the slightest hesitation. And, when I told them to do something, they'd jolly well better do it." Thus did Field Marshall Montgomery punctuate one of his favorite themes, mechanisms to encourage coordination among the armed services, for an audience of Harvard students and faculty nearly twenty years ago.¹ He was suggesting cross assignments of senior officers. Canada has now completed pursuit of this theme to its ultimate conclusion, obliteration of all lines separating army, navy, and airforce. With the formation of the one "Canadian Armed Forces", it became the first, and only, major power to experiment with total unification.² Although the milieu for Canada's choice differs in several respects from conditions in the United States, many of the problems it sought to solve were the same as those which have plagued the Pentagon. One service is not a realistic response here. But the experience to the north has succeeded in certain respects and serves as a test for potential organizational reforms in this country.

THE CANADIAN CONTEXT

In order to understand the significance of what happened and to assess its transportability to the United States, the observer must be conscious of the unique Canadian historical, national security, and cultural context.

Canada has had a long history of integrative efforts. Prior to 1912 the Dominion had a single service, the Militia,

with an infinitesimal regular establishment.³ In 1923 there came into being a single Ministry of National Defence, which, after succumbing to separate ministries during World War II, reappeared in 1946. The Army had always provided centralized dental and postal services to the others. During the 1940's and 1950's legal, medical, and chaplain services merged. The Royal Military college became a tri-service academy.⁴ The Defence Research Board came into operation as an autonomous civilian-controlled scientific research agency.⁵ Certain supply functions were integrated and single service management was utilized for selected commodities.

However, while the United States was undertaking major needed steps toward armed forces integration after World War II, commencing with the National Security Act of 1947, Canada drifted with only minor ones. It should be observed at this point for the purpose of clarity that the two countries have approached military reorganization with different meanings for the term "unification". For the Canadians it encompasses both "integration" and "merger". In the United States it has referred only to integrative measures, Congress having specifically and repeatedly prohibited merger of the unified armed services.

It was not until 1963 that two crucial events precipitated large scale action in Canada. A Royal Commission recommended further integration, pointing to triplication in recruiting, information, pay, intelligence, and the weak role of the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, Canadian equivalent of the Chairman, US Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁶ During the same

year the Liberal Party came to power with a public mandate for increased expenditures on welfare while still maintaining a defense establishment. It brought a new and young Minister of National Defence, Paul Hellyer, with a background of personal frustration at trying to cross service lines during World War II, a yen to be Prime Minister, and a determination to reorganize.⁷ He found a military with "... a disproportionate and decisive influence in the shaping of national policy...", a tendency to absorb an overly large part of the national budget, and acute doctrinal disparities.⁸

It was decided that Canada would give up its earlier ambitions to become a nuclear power in recognition of the fact that it was the involuntary beneficiary of US deterrent strength. The value of token contributions to NORAD and NATO were questioned. There was a "... decline in the credibility of the traditional primary justification for the maintenance of armed forces...."⁹ Peacekeeping for the United Nations needed only small, mobile units. The limited requirements of national security, thus, permitted experimentation.

Meanwhile, Canadians were undergoing two cultural crises: separatism and the search for a national identity. Francophones resented the British complexion of the armed services. Canadians of all ethnic origins wanted freedom from both the trappings of imperialism and the smothering influence of their southern neighbor.¹⁰ The military, as a highly visible national symbol, was an available and likely place to start toward national distinctiveness and unity.

GOALS OF UNIFICATION

Mr. Hellyer decided to go farther than the Royal Commission had recommended. He wanted merger of the three services, not just integration of their activities. His goals were improved control, efficiency, and 25% of the defense budget for new equipment. The usual reasons for defense reorganization were given: better civilian control by having one Chief of Defence Staff report to the Minister, today's reliance on joint operations, excessive duplication of functions, and unseemly rivalries. Canada had the same number of senior officers as a force five times larger in World War II. Two hundred military bands cost six million dollars annually.¹¹ In addition, career opportunities needed broadening, as did the base for selection of senior officers.¹² Decision-making was delayed by over two hundred tri-service committees, an amazing number for a total force of only 125,000.¹³

The emphasis, however, was on cutting costs. Specifically, the manpower expenses of an all-volunteer system were eating precariously into funds for modernization of equipment. The slice of the defense dollar for new equipment had slid from 42.4% in 1954 to 13% in 1963. The government argued that the cost per man of maintaining Canadian forces had reached the highest in the world.

It is interesting to note that little was said about compatibility with strategic requirements or about philosophical justification for what was being proposed.

STEPS TOWARD UNIFICATION

Although adjustments are still underway, unification was accomplished in steps extending over the four years 1964 to 1968. In 1964 Canadian Forces Headquarters opened in Ottawa under a single Chief of Defence Staff with a joint staff, replacing the separate service chiefs and separate headquarters. The following year four army regional commands, two navy regional commands, and five airforce functional commands were abolished in favor of six functional commands (Mobile, Maritime, Air Defence, Materiel, Transport, and Training).¹⁴ By 1966 all bases, recruiting centers and training establishments had been integrated, consolidating several hundred into 39 Canadian Force Bases.¹⁵ Trade skills, the Canadian equivalent of MOS's, were reduced in 1967 from 346 to 98 (28 unique to one service and 70 common to two or more), with obvious economies in use of instructors and facilities.¹⁶ The job was completed in 1968 with the formal institution of one service, the Canadian Armed Forces: one uniform, the "jolly green jumper"; and one rank structure with one salute.¹⁷

RESULTS OF UNIFICATION

It was this last step, the abolishment of the three services, that caused the most furor. At least four admirals, three air marshalls, and two generals resigned or were fired. They complained about confusion, lost values, and reduced combat effectiveness.¹⁸

Were the detractors right or wrong? A precise, complete assessment of accomplishments is an impossibility, even after six years. Inflation and the ballooning prices of complicated modern equipment distort cost comparisons, as does the reduction in total manpower from 125,000 to the present 83,000. The new posture has never been tested in combat. There have been developments, such as automation, which affect assessment and could have occurred without unification. Civilian control, loyalty, national unity, and national identity are nebulous concepts, hardly amenable to careful measurement. When the balance sheet is drawn, however, one must conclude that it all has worked, and worked for the better, within the special Canadian context.

Costs

Nevertheless, all of Mr. Hellyer's goals were not accomplished. The primary impetus for unification was cost-cutting. No doubt costs were cut, but the aim of 25% of budget for modern equipment was never achieved. Early government reports were optimistic. In 1964 Mr. Hellyer announced purchases of new equipment, including jet fighters and ships, as a result of savings he claimed had been brought about from the first integration steps.¹⁹ Later figures reveal, however, that gross expenditures on equipment almost steadily declined from a high of 301 million dollars of a total national defense budget in FY 1961-1962 of 1,626 million dollars to 148 million of 1,943 million in the FY 1972-1973 estimate.²⁰ The

equipment slice has never exceeded 1963's 13%. Complaints of obsolescence are still being heard. The CAF fleet of some 3000 standard light utility trucks, for example, was purchased at the end of the Korean War.²¹

There were also early reports of personnel reductions. A 30% personnel savings was being effected in many operations. Canadian combined staff officers in Washington were reduced by 34%, in London by 44%.²² Total populations of 6,472 military and civilians in the three service headquarters dropped to 4,487 at CFHQ, although admittedly some headquarters commitments had been sloughed off to functional command centers.²³ The reserves were cut by 4000 men and 41 armories, at an estimated annual savings of 35 million dollars. Still, largely as a result of pay increases, annual per serviceman cost rose from 13,000 dollars in 1964 to 22,000 dollars in 1973, second only to the United States.²⁴

A recent Department of National Defense study maintains that the 1.8 billion dollar budget would have been 2.3 billion without unification.²⁵ In terms of percentage of GNP, Canada's military forces cost less than one-half of what they did ten years ago.²⁶ But there has also been a substantial reduction in military muscle, including Canada's contribution to NATO. Cost savings, which were the most compelling argument for unification, are the least impressive result.

Efficiencies

Expenditure reduction was not the only hoped-for result of the Canadian experiment. Efficiency was another and that has improved as a result of standardization and less duplication. In addition to the consolidations mentioned above, one million line items of equipment and uniform were reduced by 50%. Three intelligence directorates were merged into one, as were the three recruiting services. Basic training camps were reduced from 11 to 2, specialized schools reduced from 91 to 30.²⁷

Control

Canada's lean forces can also look with pride on improvements in decision-making and command control. All agree that decisions are being made faster. It took 22 minutes to put forces into operation against the Quebec guerrillas in 1970, an effort that earlier would have taken at least a day.²⁸ Canada responded with exceptional speed to the United Nations call for help in the Indo-Pakistan border dispute, as compared to the time required for earlier responses to similar peace-keeping requests.

There is no such thing anymore as inter-service rivalry and controversy. No longer is a joint commander accused of favoring members of his own service over officers from other services. But there are still problems. As late as 1972 a management review group was recommending to the House of Commons

Committee on External Affairs and National Defence certain new measures for "... bringing together the various components into a single structure...."²⁹

Personnel

Personnel disruption was a serious problem, at least at the top. The five highest officers at Defence Headquarters left or were fired and 13 of the 15 major national military appointments changed in a matter of weeks.³⁰ Fortunately, no one shot at Canada during that period. Disruption is a temporary thing. Time and retirements are healing the wounds.

The evaluation of other effects of unification on personnel is subjective and productive of conflicting opinions. The most objective measure of the CAF's career attractiveness is recruiting. Strength has stabilized at 83,000 for several years. A 1968 report revealed a recruiting rise of 60% over the previous year.³¹ But a later one in 1971 complained of difficulty finding men qualified for specialist ratings.

Morale, esprit, and loyalty have been assisted by a large pay increase. The most plausible observation on these three intangibles comes from an American publication:

Although much opposition to the unification of the Canadian forces was voiced in operational or financial terms, most of the agony arising from unification was the result of cultural shock, the disturbance of the sense of community within each of the three former services. The possibility of loss or erosion of such things as the regimental system, the traditions woven into the order of the former services, the more familiar faces of routines, the style of each service, all weighed far more heavily on most opponents of unification than did

the direct operational or financial aspects. A lessened sense of community will be found in the present Canadian forces, with a narrowing of the separation from the civilian social order, until new and shared experiences, traditions, routines, and customs develop.³²

Here, again, there are many variables other than unification. Morale can be heavily influenced by such factors as outmoded equipment, reduced promotion opportunities in a shrinking force, and the general pressures and anxieties affecting all of society.

The professional competence of CAF personnel has improved. Common promotion, evaluation, retirement, and education systems have eliminated relative disparities and inadequacies. Although it was originally anticipated that soldiers, sailors, and airmen would not be sent out of their specialized "environments", a healthy cross-fertilization has occurred:

In this voluntary service, just about what was expected to happen, has. Already, many from the Air Force or the Army are serving voluntarily on shipboard, and many Navy and Army men are serving on aircraft. Their skills serve as well in either assignment, it is being found. Thus, former naval fliers are serving as pilots with the Air Transport Command or with the Canadian Forces in Europe.³³

As a further result, Canada is now producing generalist officers with some knowledge of land, sea, and air warfare, as well as a new open-mindedness toward change.³⁴

The Jolly Well Did It

The returns on Canadian unification are, thus, mixed. They are not yet completely in and they may never be. After

a major reorganization every institution tends to readjust itself and then go on about the business at hand without much looking back to determine whether things might be going better had there been no revolution. The literature to date is sketchy. But we can reach certain conclusions. There have been sufficient personnel reductions and logistics improvements to keep the lid on defense spending but not enough to increase funds available for equipment modernization. Efficiency and control have improved. Decisions are being made with less public controversy. Personnel turbulence, a significant concern for Canadians at the outset, has subsided and caused no catastrophe. Strength has stabilized. Soldiers, sailors, and airmen are able to perform their duties in one uniform. Canadian armed forces unification worked in the sense that that country has a more responsive, distinctive, and still viable defense establishment. Good or bad in the long run, they have jolly well done it.

LESSONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

The United States has an immediate concern with the capacity of the reduced and reoriented CAF to be of help in the defense of North America and to fulfill Canadian commitments to our mutual defense alliances. That question, like the current Canadian economic protectionism, is one over which we have no control and seemingly little influence. We can, however, examine their experience with armed forces unification for potential lessons.

Parallels

Mr. Hellyer took radical steps in 1964 to deal with many of the same public pressures and complaints which have been heard about the military in this country. The Canadians ended conscription years ago. We are just now faced with the price tag carried by an all-volunteer force. Pay and allowances took 55.4% of estimated US defense outlays in FY 1975 as compared to 41.8% in FY 1968.³⁵ This is despite substantial reductions in manpower levels. Strong Congressional criticism has been heard of Department of Defense mismanagement and the inability of the command structure to meet emergency situations such as the USS Pueblo incident.³⁶ Under attack are the committee system, inter-service competition for funds, large headquarters and staffs, duplication of effort, and other inefficiencies.³⁷ Meanwhile, as the economy deteriorates, as relief is felt over disentanglement from Vietnam, and as international tensions give at least the surface appearance of easing, the US public is insisting on a greater transfer of tax dollars from defense to domestic needs.

Differences

With that, the parallel with the Canadian climate of ten years ago ends. Size differential alone is enough to make a comparison of organizational techniques quite difficult, if not impossible. CAF strength is less than three

percent of US military manpower on active duty. The problems involved in managing a 1.8 billion dollar defense budget are hardly of the same magnitude as those coupled with expenditures in excess of 80 billion dollars. In addition, the Canadians could afford to experiment from security. A major failure there would not have affected the world balance of power or the nuclear stalemate.³⁸

The political environments also differ. Congress has rejected service merger, as it has the concepts of a single Chief of Staff and one overall armed forces general staff. Although arguments over merger have continued controversial and divisive in this country since 1947, no administration has introduced any substantial legislation toward that goal for many years. There is simply no significant support in the United States today for abolition of service lines.³⁹

The principal reason for this is that we have taken a basically different approach to many of the same problems faced by Canadians and have solved many. As indicated above, the term "unification" in the United States means not merger, as it has in Canada, but the overlaying of an additional structure on top of the service departments. The Secretary of Defense, aided by a series of statutory and administrative changes, has gradually moved toward centralized control. The command line now by-passes the military departments and runs directly from the President to the Secretary of Defense and through the Joint Chiefs of Staff to unified and specified commands.

Duplication and overlapping have been remedied in many functional areas by the creation of coordinating and consolidating organizations at the Defense Department level, such as the Defense Nuclear Agency, Defense Communications Agency, National Security Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, Defense Supply Agency, Defense Contract Audit Agency, Defense Security Assistance Agency, and Defense Civil Preparedness Agency.

In addition, separate service responsibility for logistics has been modified by cross-servicing, joint use of facilities, single-manager operating agencies, and the provision of common supply items not only by DSA but also by the Federal Supply Service. Although the United States defense establishment does not have a unified logistics command, common logistics systems policy objectives are dictated by the Secretary of Defense.

The committee system continues in the United States. It will always be here because such a large and complex military establishment will always have a need for coordination. Time-critical decisions, however, can be made through the unified-specified command chain and by means of emergency powers held by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

A final, and crucial, difference between Canada and this country lies in the fact that American defense thinkers have gone beyond superficial complaints about service rivalries and have reached the conclusion that competition is healthy. Samuel P. Huntington has eloquently pointed out that service

splits tend to avoid doctrinal conformity, to inform the public of the issues, and to guarantee active participation by the civilian authorities in the decision-making process.

In addition, he offers the following judgments:

...Experts in military organization often argue that 'unification' requires either the merger of the four services into a single uniform or the abolition of the services and organization of the Pentagon purely on a functional basis. The former proposal, however, is blindly utopian in rejecting the inevitability of pluralism, and the latter could intensify conflict to the point where it would be unbearable. 'Unification' is more likely to come not from the reduction or elimination of intra-military controversy but from its multiplication.

Diversification of function also gave the services organizational flexibility and balance by freeing them from identification with and dependence upon any single strategic concept of functional mission.
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The adversary system is the long-acknowledged sine qua non of Anglo-American jurisprudence. It takes two lawyers in a courtroom for the truth to be reached. Likewise, disagreement among military men in different uniforms and with different viewpoints, even though it may appear ungentlemanly when brought to public attention, is a commendable mechanism for reaching correct military decisions.

Conclusions

Unification in the Canadian one uniform sense is not a serious prospect for the United States. The CAF was a response to a uniquely Canadian set of circumstances. Merger could possibly have produced benefits here immediately after World

War II, but it is no longer necessary or advisable. American unification measures, oriented toward layering, are simply too extensive to be reversed now.

This is not to say that the Canadian experiment can teach us nothing. These are the lessons:

1. Major organizational reforms can be accomplished without jeopardizing a viable defense posture. Although important changes are difficult to accept, competent, dedicated military men will undergo them and continue to perform their duties. Retaining their professionally-required respect for civilian authority, the Canadian military have risked new organizational improvements and survived. So can we.

2. The Canadians have accomplished integrative steps which we have not and which we well might consider. For example, the CAF has shown that overlapping functions such as pay, information, chaplains, dental and medical care, and postal service can be integrated without damage to flexibility, diversity, or service loyalty. A joint Defense Recruiting Service and elimination of additional headquarters staffing have been seriously proposed for the US and should be pursued.⁴¹ Common talents can be made easily transferable among the services. Neither maintenance nor procurement has been single-managed by us might very well be. A unified school system has much to commend it. We should lend an ear to Field Marshall Montgomery's proposal, seconded by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund Report in 1958, that all officers above a certain rank be placed on the same promotion and assignment

lists.⁴²

All of these steps have been taken by the Canadians. They are working. At the least, they deserve careful thought and study in the United States.



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FOOTNOTES

1. Bernard Law Montgomery, Untitled Lecture.
2. "Canada in Perspective," Armed Forces Journal International, April 1973, p. 42. Yugoslavia, Israel, and Burma did it earlier.
3. George T. James, COL, Canadian Armed Forces Unification: Possible Model for the United States? P. 5.
4. Richard G. Ross, A Paradigm in Defense Organization: Unification of the Canadian Armed Forces, p. 1.
5. Adrian Preston, "The Profession of Arms in Postwar Canada, 1945-1970: Political Authority as a Military Problem," World Politics, January 1971, p. 199.
6. Richard F. Baldwin, COL, Service Unification: Have the Canadians Found the Answer? P. 36.
7. Frank Flaherty, "Hellyer Hits Snag in Merger of Canadian Armed Forces," Washington Post, 10 November 1966, p. L 2.
8. Preston, pp. 194, 200, 209.
9. Colin S. Gray, Canadian Defence Priorities: A Question of Relevance, p. 41.
10. Ibid., p. 196.
11. Ross, p. 37.
12. Richard F. Baldwin, p. 54.
13. James, p. 16.
14. "Canada Unifies Its Forces," Army Digest, November 1970, p. 22.
15. James Eayrs, "Canada Pioneers the Single Service," The Round Table, April 1969, p. 154.
16. Richard F. Baldwin, p. 57.

17. Robert H. Estabrook, "Canada's Military Merger, Hotly Opposed Year Ago, Coming Into Effect Quietly," Washington Post, 29 January 1968, p. A 17.
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19. Jay Walz, "Canada Sets \$1.5 Billion Military Modernization," New York Times, 23 December 1964, p. 10.
20. Gray, appendix A.
21. John Gellner, "The Neglect of Canada's Defence Set-up," Toronto Globe and Mail, 15 September 1972, p. 5-F.
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26. Norman Z. Alcock, et al., "Defence in the 70s: Comments on the White Paper," Behind the Headlines, p. 17.
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28. Middleton, p. 9.
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30. R. A. Cameron, "Canadian Armed Forces Merger Runs Into Trouble, Called Mistake," Navy, May 1970, p. 22.
31. Estabrook, p. A 17.
32. R. F. Barnes, "The Profession of Arms in Canada Today," Military Review, August 1972, p. 56.
33. Army Digest, p. 26.

34. R. B. Byers and Colin S. Gray, Canadian Military Professionalism: the search for identity, p. 7.

35. James R. Schlesinger, Report of the Secretary of Defense to the Congress, p. 20.

36. Richard F. Baldwin, p. 1.

37. James, p. 32.

38. Richard F. Baldwin, p. 66.

39. Roswell L. Gilpatric, "The Joint Chiefs of Staff and Military Unification," in Problems of National Strategy, ed. by Henry A. Kissinger, p. 445.

40. Samuel P. Huntington, "Inter-Service Competition and the Political Roles of the Armed Services," Ibid., p. 475.

41. Melvin R. Laird, Posture Statement, p. 14.

42. Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Inc., International Security--The Military Aspect, p. 32.

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